

# Jon Bon Jovi, Bobby Bandiera and Friends present a night of Hope in Red Bank

By: JAY LUSTIG | December 24, 2015

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I've heard Jon Bon Jovi sing "Bad Medicine" in concert countless times over the last 30 years. But I felt like I was hearing it for the first time Wednesday night at the Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank, when he closed the first of the evening's two Hope Concerts with it.

He performed it as a sexually charged duet with Layonne Holmes, one of the show's backing vocalists and a dependably fiery performer, well known to Shore audiences for her work with the Motor City Revue, Bobby Bandiera's Jersey Shore Rock 'n' Soul Revue and other groups. They stood close to each other and gazed into each other's eyes, as if obsessed, as they sang; I was reminded of the Mick Jagger/Tina Turner duet at Live Aid. "Bad Medicine" is a song about being addicted to love, of course, and so it was perfectly suited for this kind of treatment. Bon Jovi really got into it, even getting on his knees to plead his case.

There were two shows, at 7 and 9:30 p.m., and Bon Jovi closed the early show with a mini-set including "Lost Highway," "Who Says You Can't Go Home" (a duet with Jillian Rhys McCoy), "Blue Christmas" (during which he wore a Santa hat) and then "Bad Medicine." (There was no encore.) Bandiera led the large house band, and was, in fact, in charge of organizing the entire event, the eighth in a series of benefits for various Shore charities.

Bandiera has, until recently, toured as a guitarist with the group Bon Jovi, and the two men seemed glad to be onstage together again. Bon Jovi praised Bandiera for making the Hope concerts happen, and got the biggest laugh of the evening by joking, "I just want you to know, me and Bobby, we *dye* our hair gray."

Southside Johnny had been planning to perform too, but had to cancel due to illness, Bandiera announced. And so Bandiera got to sing some of the songs the band had worked up for Southside, including the Steven Van Zandt-written Asbury Jukes standard "I Don't Want to Go Home," the doo-wop hit "Speedo" (featuring bass vocals by Tim McLoone) and a swaggering cover of "That's Life" — a nice nod to Frank Sinatra in his centennial year.

Deborah Harry provided one of the show's highlights with a frenetic rock version of the Christmas song, "We Three Kings" and also sang her Blondie hit "One Way or Another" and shared lead vocals with Gary U.S. Bonds and John Cafferty on "Night Time Is the Right Time." Bonds was in high spirits on his rowdy hits "New Orleans" and "Quarter to Three." Cafferty's epic "On the Dark Side" included a trip out into the audience.

Though it was mostly an upbeat show, there were some powerful ballads, too, including Bandiera's "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother" (which really benefited from the band's big, rich sound), Cafferty's "Tender Years" and Bonds' "What Becomes of the Brokenhearted." On various songs throughout the evening, 11 young participants in the Basie's educational Rockit!



*The eighth Hope Concerts, organized by Bobby Bandiera, took place at the Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank Wednesday night.*

program formed a mini-choir on a raised stage behind the drum kit.

It was a briskly paced show; it had to be, I guess, since it was the first of two. I thought the two-show format worked fine; two hours of first-rate music, with lots of different performers and a few genuine surprises, is a perfectly satisfying evening.

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